



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Beaverhead-Deerlodge
National Forest
Jefferson Ranger District

3 Whitetail Road
Whitehall, MT 59759
(406) 287-3223

File Code: 1950

Date: December 20, 2002

Dear Planning Participant:

The Jefferson Ranger District of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest has received an application from Verizon Wireless to install a permanent telecommunication site at Homestake Pass. The proposed site is in Jefferson County. The legal description is Section 13, T2N, R7W and is located just south of Interstate 90 on the Continental Divide (see Vicinity Map). Verizon's proposal is to construct a 120 foot telecommunication tower (self-supporting), a small modular building at the tower's base to house the communication equipment, and install a 50 feet by 60 feet security fence around the base. A power line (approximately 300 feet long) would be installed from an existing nearby power line. An existing low standard road accesses the proposed communication site, but some minor drainage work would be needed to correct a drainage problem and provide better access for construction equipment (i.e., concrete mixing truck). The tower and building would be large enough to serve Verizon as well as at least four other communication companies who may wish to establish their communication systems at a later date. The Forest Service would designate this as a communication site.

Verizon has requested the Homestake Pass site because currently the cell phone coverage in this area is poor to non-functioning due to rough, mountainous terrain and distance to its other towers. Cell phone users have long recognized the limited coverage along this segment of I-90. Also, this I-90 segment over the mountain pass is steep and curvy, resulting in more accidents in the winter and more stalled vehicles (overheated) in the summer. Thus, people are making (or attempting) emergency cell phone calls more frequently on the Homestake Pass highway segment. Installing a cellular telephone tower at Homestake Pass would provide complete cell phone coverage on both sides of the pass to either Butte to the west or Whitehall to the east.

The Jefferson Ranger District is preparing an environmental assessment to determine potential effects of the proposal. We are seeking your input on this proposal. If you would like to comment, please contact Terry Sexton by: phone - (406) 287-3223; e-mail – tsexton@fs.fed.us; or write – Jefferson Ranger District, 3 Whitetail Road, Whitehall, MT 59759. To help us address your concerns in a timely manner, please contact me by January 31, 2003.

Comments received in response to this letter, including names and addresses of those who comment, will become part of the public record and will be available for public inspection.

Sincerely,

TERRY J. SEXTON
District Ranger



